GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1197
ANSWERED ON:02.08.2006
VISIT OF MINISTER ABROAD
Saradgi Shri Iqbal Ahmed

Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) Whether he visited the Gulf countries recently;

(b) If so, whether discussions were held with labour ministers of these countries regarding condition of Indian labourers working there; and

(c) If so, the details and the outcome thereof?

Answer

MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (VAYALAR RAVI)

(a) to (c) Yes Sir. The visit included Qatar, Bahrain, UAE and Saudi Arabia recently. In Bahrain, discussions were held with H.E. Dr. Majeed Bin Muhsin Al-Alawi, Labour Minister of Bahrain. During the interaction, two issues were discussed: namely

(i) the payment of compensation to the families of those Indians who lost their lives in the recent Al -Dana Boat tragedy,

(ii) Instances of exploitation of Indian workers in Bahrain by their employers which had in one case resulted in workers going on strike. In UAE, discussions were held with H.E. Dr. Ali Bin Abdulah Al Kaabi, Minister of Labour, UAE on issues relating to Indian workers including cases of non-payment of salaries, poor working conditions, instances of exploitation of workers by foreign employees in UAE, misuse of the quota system for issue of bulk visit visas by unscrupulous intermediaries resulting in overseas Indian workers being exploited by foreign employers in the host countries. In both meetings, the need for labour market reforms including an institutional arrangement for ensuring the protection and welfare of Indian workers in the Gulf Countries was emphasised. Both dignitaries indicated that new initiatives were being undertaken aimed at labour reforms to provide for better protection and improved welfare of overseas workers.